

*N. major*, of which probably it is the analogue on the western side of the Cordillera. It is larger and has a considerably longer beak than the *N. major*; its breast is not spotted, and its abdomen has a less fulvous tinge. The *N. perdicarius* runs on the open ground, generally a pair together, in the same unconcealed manner, as its analogue, and does not readily lie close. Flight similar, but on rising it utters a shriller whistle, of a different tone. It does not appear to be so easily caught as the Plata species. It is tolerably abundant in all parts of Chile, as far north as the valley of Guasco; but I was assured, that it has never been seen in the valley of Copiapo, although only seventy miles north of Guasco, and of a similar character. The egg is very glossy and of a peculiar colour, which, according to Werner's nomenclature, is a palish chocolate red: length in longer axis 2·07 of an inch; shorter axis 1·495 of an inch. The egg of the *N. minor* is of a similar colour, but a shade paler, and rather smaller; its length being 1·815, and its transverse diameter 1·3 of an inch.

#### RHYNCHOTUS RUFESCENS. Wagl.

Rhynchotus rufescens, Wagl. Av. Syst.

Tinamus rufescens. Temm. Gall. iii. p. 552.

Rhynchotus fasciatus. Spix. Av. Br. pl. 76.

Cryptura Guaza. Vieill.

Crypturus rufescens. Licht. Vög. Verz. s. 67.

My specimens were procured at Maldonado, where it is a much rarer bird than the *Nothura major*; I met with it also in the sterile country near Bahia Blanca. At Maldonado it frequented swampy thickets on the borders of lakes. It lies very close, and is unwilling to rise, but often utters, whilst on the ground, a very shrill whistle. When on the wing, it flies to a considerable distance. Several are generally found together, but they do not rise at the same instant, like a covey of partridges. Flesh, when cooked, perfectly white. Spix's specimens were procured in the country between St. Paul's and Minas Geraes; so that this bird, as well as the *Nothura minor*, has a considerable range.

#### ORDER—CURSORES. Temm.

##### 1. RHEA AMERICANA. Lath.

This bird is well known to abound on the plains of La Plata. To the north it is found, according to Azara, in Paraguay, where, however, it is not common; to the south its limit appears to be from 42° to 43°. It has not crossed the Cordillera; but

1

I have seen it within the first range of mountains on the Uspallata plain, elevated between six and seven thousand feet. The ordinary habits of the ostrich are well known. They feed on vegetable matter, such as roots and grass; but at Bahia Blanca, I have repeatedly seen three or four come down at low water to the extensive mud-banks which are then dry, for the sake, as the Gauchos say, of catching small fish. Although the ostrich in its habits is so shy, wary, and solitary, and although so fleet in its pace, it falls a prey, without much difficulty, to the Indian or Gaucho armed with the bolas. When several horsemen appear in a semicircle, it becomes confounded, and does not know which way to escape. They generally prefer running against the wind; yet at the first start they expand their wings, and like a vessel make all sail. On one fine hot day I saw several ostriches enter a bed of tall rushes, where they squatted concealed, till quite closely approached. It is not generally known that ostriches readily take to the water. Mr. King informs me that in Patagonia, at the Bay of San Blas and at Port Valdes, he saw these birds swimming several times from island to island. They ran into the water, both when driven down to a point, and likewise of their own accord, when not frightened: the distance crossed was about 200 yards. When swimming, very little of their bodies appear above water, and their necks are extended a little forward: their progress is slow. On two occasions, I saw some ostriches swimming across the Santa Cruz river, where it was about four hundred yards wide, and the stream rapid. Captain Sturt,\* when descending the Murrumbidgee, in Australia, saw two emus in the act of swimming.

The inhabitants who live in the country readily distinguish, even at a distance, the male bird from the female. The former is larger and darker coloured,† and has a larger head. The ostrich, I believe the cock, emits a singular, deep-toned, hissing note. When first I heard it, standing in the midst of some sand-hillocks, I thought it was made by some wild beast, for it is a sound that one cannot tell whence it comes, or from how far distant. When we were at Bahia Blanca in the months of September and October, the eggs were found, in extraordinary numbers, all over the country. They either lie scattered single, in which case they are never hatched, and are called by the Spaniards, huachos, or they are collected together into a shallow excavation, which forms the nest. Out of the four nests which I saw, three contained twenty-two eggs each, and the fourth twenty-seven. In one day's hunting on horseback sixty-four eggs were found; forty-four of these were in two nests, and the remaining twenty scattered huachos. The Gauchos unanimously affirm, and there is no reason to doubt their statement, that the male

\* Sturt's Travels, vol. ii. p. 74.

† A Gaucho assured me that he had once seen a snow-white, or Albino variety, and that it was a most beautiful bird.